

## UNIT 2: God's Creating Work

### Section 8: Elect Angels

*Systematic Theologies:*  
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#### INTRODUCTION:

We've looked at several introductory issues in relation to Angels. Now, we're going to examine the work of Elect Angels. The scriptures present several situations demonstrating angelic ministry. We'll look at these occasions and draw some conclusions regarding the activity of these messengers of God.

**Q1: Purpose: When and why did elect angels appear in biblical times?**

**Q2: Function: What do elect angels do?**

**Q3: Are there guardian angels?**

**Hebrews 1:14** provides an excellent overall statement regarding the purpose of function of elect angels: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" They are "servants" of God sent by God "to help" [εἰς διακονίαν] believers!

#### OUTLINE:

### I. Elect Angels Service to God the Father

#### A. Adoration of God

##### 1. They worship and praise God:

- a. **Psalm 148:1-2** Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! <sup>2</sup> Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts!
  - b. **Isaiah 6:1-3** In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. <sup>2</sup> Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup> And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."
  - c. **Luke 1:19** The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.
- ##### 2. They rejoice in God's Work: **Job 38:4-7** "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, <sup>5</sup> Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? <sup>6</sup> "On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, <sup>7</sup> When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

#### B. Execution of Providence

1. We know that God is directing the course of the nations, He is sovereign over them... **Psalm 22:28** For the kingdom is the LORD'S And He rules over the **nations**. **33:10** The LORD nullifies the counsel of the **nations**; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. **46:6** The **nations** made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted. **47:8** God reigns over the **nations**, God sits on His holy throne.

2. **And we know that God enacts His plans at times through angels:** The book of Daniel presents this picture for us... Culver, "In Daniel's vision, received during the third year of Cyrus the Great of Persia (**Dan 10:1**), Daniel learned that there was an angelic prince designated for the kingdom of Persia (**10:3**), another for Greece (**10:20**) and still another for Israel (**10:21, 11:1**). Some of these angels seem to be satanically assigned." Michael guards Israel (**12:1**)
3. **Angels are "servants of God"**
  - a. **Ps 103:19-22** The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all. <sup>20</sup> Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word! <sup>21</sup> Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You who serve Him, doing His will. <sup>22</sup> Bless the LORD, all you works of His, In all places of His dominion; Bless the LORD, O my soul!
  - b. **Rev 22:9** But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."
  - c. **Example here for us in prayer: Matt 6:10** 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. – Just as the elect angels obey the Lord, so we are to seek that we serve the Lord wholeheartedly!
4. **As we'll see below, angels are particularly manifest around crucial junctures in God's redemptive plan...**

## II. Elect Angels Service to God the Son

### A. In Association with His Birth

1. *Regarding Christ's Forerunner—John:* **Luke 1:11-13** And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.
2. *With Mary:* **Luke 1:26-27** Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.
3. *With Joseph:* **Matt 1:20** But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.
4. *Announcing Jesus' Birth:* **Luke 2:8-14** In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; <sup>11</sup> for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> "This *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."
5. *Direction Regarding Herod:* **Matt 2:13** Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His

for the Child to destroy Him." **v19-21** But when Herod died, behold, an **angel** of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said,<sup>20</sup> "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead."<sup>21</sup> So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

### *B. In His Earthly Ministry*

1. *Beginning – After Praying for 40days/nights and the Devil's Tempting:* **Matt 4:11** Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him.
2. *Closing – While Praying Prior to His Crucifixion:* **Luke 22:43** Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.
3. Jesus explained that He could have called upon legions of angels to help at anytime (Matt 26:53), but there is no mention in the Gospels besides these two of angelic help.

### *C. In Association with His Resurrection*

1. *Rolling the Stone:* **Matt 28:2** And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.
2. *Announcement:*
  - a. **Matt 28:5-6** The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified."<sup>6</sup> "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.
  - b. **Luke 24:4-7** While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing;<sup>5</sup> and as *the women* were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, *the men* said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead?"<sup>6</sup> "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee,<sup>7</sup> saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."
3. *At His Ascension:* **Acts 1:9-11** And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.<sup>10</sup> And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.<sup>11</sup> They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

### *D. At His 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent*

1. **1 Thes 4:16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.
2. **Matt 25:31** "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.
3. **Giving Praise: Rev 5:11** Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,<sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the

Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

4. **Dispensing Judgment:**

- a. **Matt 13:41** "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,<sup>42</sup> and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- b. **2 Thes 1:6-10** For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,<sup>7</sup> and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,<sup>8</sup> dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.<sup>9</sup> These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,<sup>10</sup> when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-- for our testimony to you was believed.
- c. **\*Revelation 7-9; 16**

### III. Elect Angels Service to God's People

#### A. *Angelic Ministry to God's People in the Scriptures*

1. *OT:*

- a. *Moses and the Burning Bush:* **Exodus 3:2** The **angel** of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.
- b. *In punishing Israel:* **2 Sam 24:15-17** So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time, and seventy thousand men of the people from Dan to Beersheba died.<sup>16</sup> When the **angel** stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the calamity and said to the **angel** who destroyed the people, "It is enough! Now relax your hand!" And the **angel** of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.<sup>17</sup> Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the **angel** who was striking down the people, and said, "Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done wrong; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand be against me and against my father's house."
- c. *In protecting Israel:* **2 Kings 19:35** Then it happened that night that the **angel** of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead.
- d. *In patrolling the earth:* **Zechariah 1:10** And the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered and said, "These are those whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth."<sup>11</sup> So they answered the **angel** of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees and said, "We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is peaceful and quiet."

2. *NT:*

- a. *In freeing the apostles from prison:*

- (1) **Acts 5:19-20** But during the night an **angel** of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, <sup>20</sup> "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life."
  - (2) **Acts 12:7-11** And behold, an **angel** of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. <sup>8</sup> And the **angel** said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." <sup>9</sup> And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the **angel** was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. <sup>10</sup> When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the **angel** departed from him. <sup>11</sup> When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His **angel** and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."
- b. *In directing Philip:* **Acts 8:26** But an **angel** of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.)
  - c. *In bringing instruction to a Gentile regarding salvation:* **Acts 10:3** About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an **angel** of God who had *just* come in and said to him, "Cornelius!"
  - d. *In striking Herod:* **Acts 12:23** And immediately an **angel** of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.
  - e. *In Encouraging Paul:* **Acts 27:23** "For this very night an **angel** of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, <sup>24</sup> saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.
  - f. *In Carrying at death:* **Luke 16:22** "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.
  - g. *In Observation:*
    - (1) Angels do not personally experience salvation, so the only way they can see it and give glory unto God for it, is to observe it manifest in saved human beings. The apostles and Christians in general are all a display of the riches of God's grace for the rest of the world as well as the angelic hosts.
      - o **1 Cor 4:9** For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.
      - o **Eph 3:10** so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*.
      - o **1 Peter 1:12** It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look.
      - o **Luke 15:10** "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

- (2) Angels witness our behavior: If we obey, it brings out their rejoicing in God, if we rebel it grieves them.
  - o **1 Corinthians 11:10** Therefore the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on her head, because of the angels.
  - o **1 Timothy 5:21** I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of *His* chosen angels, to maintain these *principles* without bias, doing nothing in a *spirit of* partiality.

### B. What about Guardian Angels?

1. The doctrine of “guardian angels” (the belief that each Christian has an angel assigned to him, or to each child, or each church) has been inferred from certain texts:
  - (1) **Hebrews 1:14** Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?
  - (2) **Matthew 18:3,10** and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven... See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.
  - (3) **Acts 12:15** They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his **angel.**"
  - (4) **Revelation 1:20** "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.
  - (5) **Matt 4:5-7** Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"
2. **James Boyce**, “This theory of a guardian angel has been held in various forms. Some have confined his presence to the good; some have extended it also to the wicked; some to the elect before or after conversion; some to all men alike; some have supposed two angels instead of one, the one good, the other bad. In like manner has the theory been held of guardian angels over nations; some confining that also to good nations, other extending it to all. That such views existed among the Jews, and that they were also prevalent among the earlier Christians may be admitted; but the scriptural authority for them is wanting.”
3. **Acts 12:15** is perhaps the closest to a “guardian angel” concept... although some argue that what the disciples believed the girl was seeing was the “spirit of Peter” not an angel. Also, even if they believed she was seeing an angel, we must keep in mind that all we have here is a sentiment being expressed that was commonly believed. Surely there is not enough evidence from this report to mandate a doctrine of “guardian angels,” and if this is the place that this doctrine is being completely substantiated, this interpretive model is subject to much abuse in other texts...

4. **\*John Calvin's** statement set a standard in this discussion (*Institutes I*, 14.7).
  - a. "Whether or not each believer has a single angel assigned to him for his defence, I dare not positively affirm. When Daniel introduces the angel of the Persian and the angel of the Greeks (**Dan. 10:13,20; 12:1**), he undoubtedly intimates that certain angels are appointed as a kind of presidents over kingdoms and provinces. Again, when Christ says that the angels of children always behold the face of his Father (**Matt. 18:10**), he insinuates that there are certain angels to whom their safety has been entrusted. But I know not if it can be inferred from this, that each believer has his own angel. This, indeed, I hold for certain, that each of us is cared for, not by one angel merely, but that all with one consent watch for our safety. For it is said of all the angels collectively, that they rejoice "over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." (**Luke 15:7**). It is also said, that the angels (meaning more than one) carried the soul of Lazarus into Abraham's bosom (**Luke 16:22p**). Nor was it to no purpose that Elisha showed his servant the many chariots of fire which were specially allotted him (**II Kings 6:17**)."
  - b. "There is one passage which seems to intimate somewhat more clearly that each individual has a separate angel. When Peter, after his deliverance from prison, knocked at the door of the house where the brethren were assembled, being unable to think it could be himself, they said that it was his angel (**Acts 12:15**). This idea seems to have been suggested to them by a common belief that every believer has a single angel assigned to him. Here, however, it may be alleged, that there is nothing to prevent us from understanding it of any one of the angels to whom the Lord might have given the charge of Peter at that particular time, without implying that he was to be his, perpetual guardian, according to the vulgar imagination, (see Calvin on **Mark 5: 9**) that two angels a good and a bad, as a kind of genii, are assigned to each individual. After all, it is not worthwhile anxiously to investigate a point which does not greatly concern us. If any one does not think it enough to know that all the orders of the heavenly host are perpetually watching for his safety, I do not see what he could gain by knowing that he has one angel as a special guardian. Those, again, who limit the care which God takes of each of us to a single angel, do great injury to themselves and to all the members of the Church, as if there were no value in those promises of auxiliary troops, who on every side encircling and defending us, embolden us to fight more manfully."
5. **Erickson**, "Elsewhere in the Bible, however, we read that not just one, but many angels accompanied, protected, and provided for believers. Elisha was surrounded by many horses and chariots of fire, Jesus could have called 12 legions of angels, several angels carried Lazarus's soul to Abraham's bosom... In the absence of definite didactic material, we must conclude that there is insufficient evidence for the concept of guardian angels."

### C. Do Angels Appear Today?

1. **We are told that we should show hospitality to strangers for we might be "entertaining angels without realizing it" (Heb 13:2)...** So there is no compelling reason to rule out the possibility of angelic appearances today. But be warned:
2. We must beware of false doctrine coming from "supposed angels"

- a. \*OT Example: **1 Kings 13:1-32** – *The Man of God and the Lying Prophet...*
  - b. **Gal 1:8** But even if we, or an **angel** from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!
  - c. We have seen the origin of many cults from this very thing... a leader claiming revelation having come through an angel...
  - d. **2 Cor 11:13-15** For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an **angel** of light. <sup>15</sup> Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.
  - e. **The Holy Scriptures must evaluate all experiences!**
3. We must never worship angels!
- a. **Colossians 2:18** Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,
  - b. **Revelation 19:10** Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."
  - c. **Grudem**, "The Scriptures give us no warrant to seek for appearances of angels to us. They manifest themselves unsought. To seek such appearances would seem to indicate an unhealthy curiosity or a desire for some kind of spectacular event rather than a love for God and devotion to Him and His work."
  - d. **Calvin**, "How preposterous, therefore, is it to allow ourselves to be led away from God by angels who have been appointed for the very purpose of assuring us of his more immediate presence to help us? But we are so led away, if angels do not conduct us directly to him - making us look to him, invoke and celebrate him as our only defender - if they are not regarded merely as hands moving to our assistance just as he directs - if they do not direct us to Christ as the only Mediator on whom we must wholly depend and recline, looking towards him, and resting in him."
4. **Robert Culver provides a good parallel:**
- a. "A bit of reflection by a reader fully conversant with all parts of the Bible will conclude that miracles were completely absent from most periods of Bible history. Leave out the story of the Exodus from Egypt, of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and the period of our Lord's ministry, and not many manifestly, belief-compelling supernatural events, public or private occurred. God is always acting above, within and in spite of what people call 'natural law', but in such a way that unbelief cannot or will not acknowledge it to be so. Events yet future, at the consummation of the age, will include many miraculous events..."
  - b. "The same is true of the *manifest* activity of angels. They sang at creation (Job 38:7), they appeared from time to time to the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, and made very rare appearances at critical junctures of Israel's history. They were active at Christ's birth and through His passion and the early period of apostolic ministry. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent they will be in *manifest* activity again. Meanwhile, we may be sure that 'out of sight' they are busy today as God's messengers and agents throughout the universe, particularly on behalf of God's people (Ps 34:7)."